

**Testimony Supporting
HB 6884, An Act Concerning the Recruitment, Retention and Enhancement of the
Teaching Profession**

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Education Committee
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Representative Currey, Senator McCrory, and esteemed members of the Education Committee,

My name is Peg Oliveira and I am testifying on behalf of the Gesell Program in Early Childhood at the Yale Child Study Center, an education and advocacy organization working to promote the principles of child development for all young children.

Thank you for this opportunity to support section 11 of House Bill 6884, [AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION](#). Section 11 proposes that purposeful, play-based learning be incorporated throughout the school day in grades Pre-K and Kindergarten and permits it in grades 1-5.

In support of this proposal, I would like to invalidate two common myths about play based learning.

Myth 1: Academics and play exist on opposite ends of a learning spectrum. This idea is tidy, but incorrect. Research does not choose a side; it demands we strike a balance. The goal of developmentally appropriate practice is to find the perfect mix of skill building teacher-initiated experiences to guide children toward essential standards and the social, active, and meaningful executive function boosting qualities of child directed experiences. This balanced recipe is what we call play-based learning.

Myth 2: Teaching and play exist on opposite ends of a learning spectrum. The belief that play based learning does not involve teacher engagement is also not accurate. While play based learning does allow space for the child to direct their experience, the teacher is hard at work as the guide on the side. They are observing, asking just right questions, offering prompts, and amending the environment to scaffold a child's learning, encouraging their development from a current understanding or skill to a next level of knowledge or ability.

Play based learning, with appropriate teacher engagement, is an opportunity to promote the social-emotional, cognitive, language and self-regulation skills that build executive function and a prosocial brain. The last decade suggests that too much time on drills and tests leads not to academic achievement, but to burnout. And this seems true for children and teachers alike. What

we now know about how children's brains develop compels us to revisit how we teach young children and to move towards a more active, engaged and social play-based approach.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Section 11 of HB 6884, An Act Concerning the Recruitment, Retention and Enhancement of the Teaching Profession. I can be reached with any questions at peg.oliveira@yale.edu or at 860.836.2424.